



The Revelation of Jesus Christ

"Angels in the Atmosphere"

14:6-13

At least once in your Christian lifetime you'll hear someone say that until the Gospel is preached to every last person on the earth, Jesus cannot return.

Is that true? Yes, but it depends what you mean by the 'return' of Jesus.

If you mean the rapture then, No, it is not true that the Gospel must be preached to every last person on the earth before Jesus can return. The rapture of the church, preceded almost instantaneously by the resurrection of the church-age saints, can occur at any moment. It is always imminent.

An imminent event is one which is always "hanging overhead, is constantly ready to befall or overtake one; close at hand in its incidence." ("imminent," *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 1901, V, 66.) Thus, imminence carries the sense that it could happen at any moment. Other things *may* happen before the imminent event, but nothing else *must* take place before it happens. If something else

must take place before an event can happen, then that event is not imminent. In other words, the necessity of something else taking place first destroys the concept of imminency.

If you mean by the return of Jesus His Second Coming to the earth with the church to establish the kingdom of God on the earth, then, No, He won't return until every last person on the Tribulation-ravaged earth has heard the Gospel.

Jesus once said,

Matthew 24:14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

Our text in the Revelation is the fulfillment of that prophecy. It describes events towards the end of the Great Tribulation, in the closing years and months.

Three angels deliver three messages to the inhabitants of the earth warning them that their time is very, very short.

Revelation 14:6 Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people -

Every now and then there is some atmospheric event that gets us out and looking up at the sky. Or, around here, one of the jets from LNAS flies overhead and you think it's armageddon! During the Great Tribulation people will tell you to go outside and look up because an angel is going by talking from the sky.

This angel is said to have "the everlasting Gospel." What is it? It is the good news that though a sinner you can be saved eternally.

Methods for sharing the everlasting Gospel change but never the message. It was the same in the Old Testament as it is today. It was the same in the Garden of Eden as it was at the giving of the Law on

Mount Sinai. You must be justified by grace through faith in God's Savior. Period.

In the Garden God delivered the message by slaughtering an animal or animals - probably lambs. Adam and Eve believed God's promise by faith and it was accounted to them as righteousness.

What about the Law, you ask? Isn't that how you were saved in the Old Testament?

Of course not! All the Law did was show you how far short you fell from the standards of Heaven. You would have to keep the Law perfectly and perpetually to be saved - and no one could or can.

Today our situation is such that we want to communicate the everlasting Gospel in a way or ways that reach people. We need not tenaciously hold to old methods. We should not automatically fear new methods.

We just had a presidential election. One thing the Democrats did well that the Republicans did not do much at all was to utilize the internet. Republicans admit this now - too late to change the results for this go-around.

It won't do any good to think that modern technology is a passing fad. We must utilize it for the Gospel. We must do so carefully, so as to not change the message. But we must do so.

Verse six lets us know that the preaching of this angel will be universal. Everyone on the earth everywhere on the earth will hear the Gospel.

The Gospel the angel preaches will have as its theme the following:

Revelation 14:7 saying with a loud voice, "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water."

The particular slant on the Gospel that will be most effective during the Great Tribulation is two-fold:

1. It will emphasize the judgment that is about to come upon the inhabitants of the earth at Christ's Second Coming.
2. It will emphasize God as the Creator of and, thus, the sovereign over Heaven and earth.

There are those today who feel that there is not enough preaching about the judgment to come. Others say we should always use the Law of God in our preaching to show a sinner his need for salvation. Some only emphasize the love of God and the grace of God. There are those whose emphasis is on creation and the Creator - using it as an apologetic to convince men that design requires a divine designer. We could go on-and-on.

All I can say is that we should teach the whole counsel of God - teach through all the books God has graciously inspired and given us. As we do we will hit all those topics and more.

At the same time I am blessed by those who have carved out a niche for themselves, a specialty. It's great to be able to learn from the Institute for Creation Research or Answers in Genesis about creation. Or any of the myriad of additional 'specialty' ministries.

Then, too, every church is going to have its own unique personality based upon the gifts of the people God has gathered together. No problem there, either.

All of it taken together is just various shades of the Gospel that God uses to reach the vast variety of people on the earth.

In my opinion, and that's all it is, if you want to emphasize something, emphasize the next event on the prophetic horizon. Emphasize the rapture! Jesus compared it to knowing the signs that predicted certain weather. If you know that it's going to rain, grab an umbrella. If you know the Lord could return any moment, live accordingly.

Look, Jeremiah's message was timeless but also timely. He knew that the nation of Judah was headed for a seventy year captivity in Babylon. He preached accordingly.

We should preach accordingly and for me that means letting people know that ready or not, Jesus is coming!

Revelation 14:8 And another angel followed, saying, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication."

This second angel looks ahead to the fall and destruction of a literal city of Babylon that will exist in the Great Tribulation. There is also going to be a false religious system called Babylon. We'll read all about them and their fall in chapters seventeen and eighteen.

The city and the system make "all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." The world wants to get you drunk with its excesses. One aspect of being drunk is you are desensitized to things that would normally be off limits. You feel uninhibited. The world gluts us so that things that we would once have considered off limits don't seem so bad - or even seem good!

Las Vegas is my favorite example for this. Bear with me. Listen to these excerpts from a 2005 USA Today article titled, *Vegas Goes Back to Naughty Roots*.

With the opening of family-friendly hotels such as the MGM, Treasure Island and Excalibur in the mid-1990s, Las Vegas tried to move in on Disney's family resort business.

The catch-all ad theme: "It's anything and everything."

After 9/11, the pitch focused on its emerging restaurant and resorts scene with a Burger King-like, "What you want. When you want."

Las Vegas has gotten over its... fascination with attracting "family" visitors. By returning to its image as an adults-only playground, Vegas is hip and hot again.

Las Vegas attracted a record-breaking 37.4 million visitors in 2004. That topped the 35.8 million who visited in 2000, before the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks devastated the tourism industry. This year, Las Vegas expects 38.2 million.

"We still compete with Orlando and New York. But based on overnight visitors, we're the top destination in North America," says Terry Jicinsky, head of marketing for the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority.

Las Vegas' luck winning tourist bucks owes no small debt to its risqué \$75 million ad campaign ["What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas"].

Its "What happens here" slogan is not new but has fit like a glove since Las Vegas ad shop R&R Partners created the ads two years ago. Gambling fan Ben Affleck used it on *Saturday Night Live*. Billy Crystal used it to close the 2004 Oscars. It's been a clue on *Wheel of Fortune*. When Jay Leno asked Laura Bush on *The Tonight Show* whether she had gambled or had seen a Chippendales show while visiting the Las Vegas Strip, the First Lady got a big hand by replying, "Jay, what happened in Vegas, stays in Vegas."

It's led a lot of Christians to conclude that Las Vegas is 'not that bad.' It's a great desensitization campaign. If you believe you can go to Vegas and not be over-exposed to vile images, you're drunk!

Revelation 14:9 Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand,

Revelation 14:10 he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.

Revelation 14:11 And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name."

Any concern about involuntarily taking the mark of the beast and being lost forever without realizing it should be alleviated by these verses. Whatever the mark turns out to be, you must choose to worship or to not worship the antichrist. You will first be warned by an angel declaring these words from the sky in clear language you can understand.

This is why having a Social Security number, or a credit card, or a national ID card, or even having an implanted microchip do not bother me in the least. First of all, I won't be on earth when the antichrist demands worship. It won't be until mid-trib, three and one half years into it. I will have been resurrected or raptured along with all the believers of the church age.

Even if you believe in a mid-trib or post-trib rapture, you still will have a choice to worship the antichrist or not.

If you want to oppose microchipping, do it on the basis of privacy issues. It's not a biblical problem, really. Technology is not the mark.

Eternal punishment is (sadly) taught in the Bible. I could wish it wasn't. There awaits the devil and fallen angels, the antichrist and his false prophet, an eternal place of torment with fire and brimstone. It was created especially for them. But it will be the eternal destination of all those humans who worship the antichrist after being forewarned.

And we read in other passages that it is the destination of all nonbelievers. God sends no one to Hell. It is an address you choose by rejecting the Gospel of creation, conscience, and Christ.

The fact that this torment occurs in the presence of the Lamb - Jesus Christ - and His holy angels tells me it is righteous. If I balk at it, thinking it sounds weird, it's because I do not understand this side of eternity the absolute holiness of God.

Revelation 14:12 Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

Revelation 14:13 Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' " "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them."

There will be those who refuse the mark. Their "patience" means their willingness to endure whatever earthly consequences come their

way. For multitudes, it will be martyrdom. They will be “the dead who die in the Lord” from that decision on.

They will choose Heaven over earth and, thus, they will find eternal “rest from their labors.” It will be difficult to be on the earth without the mark; it will be laborious physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Once safe in Heaven, “their works will follow them.” The Lord will reward them with those things that cannot corrupt or be taken away.

At the end of verse thirteen you’re told that the Holy Spirit speaks! We say that God speaks to us through His Spirit and usually mean that He prompts us through His written Word, or gives us a vision or a dream. But here He speaks audibly. His words are what you’d expect Him to say as the Comforter. Things are gonna be tough, but it’s all going to be great in the end. Hang in there; live for Jesus, live for eternity.

We are not enduring much tribulation, let alone the Great Tribulation. It ought to be easier for us to encourage one another to patience in our walk with the Lord. We need to comfort believers, not commiserate with them.

Commiserate is a word derived from misery. My loose definition of it is to have pity on a person’s perceived misery and join them in being miserable.

Comfort is something very different. It is a strong word. When we think of the word comfort we have a tendency to expand it to mean *comfortable*.

Being or becoming comfortable is not what the word comfort means to the believer. It is not a weak, sentimental word. The word itself in the original language means *with strength*. It is a tough word, a disciplined word – in many ways the very opposite of comfortable. You can see its meaning most clearly in Second Corinthians 1:6, which reads,

2 Corinthians 1:6 Now if we are afflicted, *it is* for your consolation and salvation, which is effective for enduring the same sufferings which we also suffer. Or if we are comforted, *it is* for your consolation and salvation.

Comfort, or consolation, is “effective for **enduring**... sufferings.” It is not intended to *end* suffering, but rather to *endure* it. **Christian comfort is the strength which is effective for enduring suffering.**

Let’s comfort other by telling them to draw upon the resources of Heaven rather than fall back into the habits of the world.

We’re near to Heaven. The Lord’s coming to resurrect and rapture us is imminent. What New Testament passages teach this truth? Those verses stating that Christ could return at any moment, without warning and those instructing believers to wait and look for the Lord’s coming teach the doctrine of imminence. Note the following New Testament passages:

1 Corinthians 1:7 "awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ,"

Philippians 3:20 "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;"

Philippians 4:5 "The Lord is near."

1 Thessalonians 1:10 "to wait for His Son from heaven,"

1 Thessalonians 4:15-1 -"For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of {the} archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words."

1 Thessalonians 5:6 "so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober."

1 Timothy 6:14 "that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ,"

Titus 2:13 "looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus;"

Hebrews 9:28 "so Christ . . . shall appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him."

James 5:7-9 "Be patient, therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. . . . for the coming of the Lord is at hand. . . . behold, the Judge is standing right at the door."

1 Peter 1:13 "fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

Jude 21 "waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life."

Revelation 3:11; 22:7, 12, 20 "'I am coming quickly!'"

Revelation 22:17, 20 "And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.' And let the one who hears say, 'Come.'" "He who testifies to these things says, 'Yes, I am coming quickly.' Amen. Come, Lord Jesus."

The early church had a special greeting for one another, as recorded in First Corinthians 16:22, which was "Maranatha!" Maranatha consists of three Aramaic words:

1. "Mar" ("Lord")
2. "ana" ("our"), and
3. "tha" ("come"), meaning "our Lord, come."

It only makes sense if any moment the Lord could return!